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ABSTRACT

Students in the City-As-School (CAS) program, an alternative high school in New York City, spend 95 percent of their school time at field-based learning sites, such as business, civic, and cultural organizations. A majority of the participants are dropouts, or were high risk students before entering the program. In 1985, CAS was awarded a grant to disseminate its model to other interested schools and districts throughout the country. Five implementation goals were: (1) selecting five districts to be trained as replicators; (2) training the staff of the replicator districts; (3) providing additional technical assistance to the replicator districts; (4) training the staff of the replicator districts to themselves become disseminators; and (5) monitoring the implementation of replication. The first two goals were achieved, but the other three could not be pursued until the replicator districts had begun to operate their programs in the second year of the process. Six districts, two in California and four in Maine, were selected and made commitments for 1985-86 training. It is recommended that, in future: (1) objectives should be tied more clearly to the program sequence; (2) implementation commitments should be made more formal and binding; (3) the dissemination sites should have a broader and more balanced geographic spread; and (4) travel should be consolidated and alternatives to traveling should be considered where possible. (KH)

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CITY-AS-SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL

NATIONAL DIFFUSION NETWORK

DEVELOPER/DEMONSTRATOR PROJECT

END OF YEAR REPORT

1985-1986

OEA Evaluation Report

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Evaluation Section Report
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Project Number: 5001-56-74201

November, 1986

CITY-AS-SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL

NATIONAL DIFFUSION NETWORK

DEVELOPER/DEMONSTRATOR PROJECT

END OF YEAR REPORT

1985-1986

Prepared by the
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SUMMARY

City-As-School (C.A.S.) is an alternative high school linking students to various out-of-school learning experiences throughout New York City. In 1985, C.A.S. was awarded a National Dissemination Network (N.D.S.) replication grant by the U.S. Department of Education. The award is given to exemplary educational programs to enable them to disseminate their model to other interested schools and districts throughout the country.

The project had five implementation goals for its first year:

- selecting five districts to be trained as replicator,
- training the staff of the replicator districts,
- providing additional technical assistance to the replicator districts,
- training the staff of the replicator districts to themselves become disseminators, able to provide training to other districts, and
- monitoring the implementation of replication.

The project achieved its first two goals. The other three goals could not be pursued until the replicator districts had begun to operate their programs in the second year of the process. Therefore they were inappropriate goals for the first year of the project.

The dissemination process began with awareness activities such as mailings of materials, telephone contacts, and presentations to districts and at professional conferences. A second stage was the selection of districts for replication based on their interest and their willingness to commit the necessary resources. Six districts, two in California and four in Maine, were selected and made commitments for 1985-86 training as replicators. Three-day training sessions were held in four of the six selected districts. The other two chose to delay their funding and along with eight new districts will receive training during the 1986-87 school year.

On the basis of the evaluation findings, the following recommendations are made:

- objectives should be tied more clearly to the program sequence,
- implementation plans should be made more formal and binding,
- the dissemination sites should have a broader and more balanced geographic spread, and
- travel should be consolidated and alternatives like mail and telephone consulting should be considered where possible.

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I. INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND

City-as-School is an alternative high school whose primary curricular objective is to link students with varied out-of-school learning experiences throughout New York City. The program offers a small core of in-house classes for enrichment and remediation, but most students spend at least 95 percent of their school time at field-based learning sites such as business, civic, cultural, and governmental organizations. Although all high school students are eligible to transfer to City-as-School, intake data on transferees demonstrates that the school is most likely to attract those whose needs and learning styles have not been satisfied by traditional high schools. A majority of incoming students have been truants, dropouts, or at risk of dropping out.

Believing that its innovative approach to the widespread problem of high school attrition was effective and applicable elsewhere, the school applied in 1978, under Title IV-C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, for a dissemination grant in New York State. The program was validated, and the school applied to the Joint Dissemination Review Panel (J.D.R.P.) for national validation, which was awarded both for dropout prevention and vocational education. This validation led, in 1985, to the award of a National Dissemination Network (N.D.N.) replication grant for 1985-86.

PROJECT GOALS

In its application to the N.C.N., City-as-School specified five implementation goals that would be pursued in the first year of a replication project. Those goals are:

- Selecting, on the basis of criteria developed by City-as-School, five districts eligible for replication assistance and likely to be successful replicators of the City-as-School model.
- Providing appropriate in-service training to staff of the five selected replicator districts that would enable them subsequently to implement the City-as-School model.
- Providing appropriate technical assistance to the five selected replicator districts.
- Providing "turnkey"* training to key staff of the five districts, preparing them to become "turnkey" sites, that is, sites prepared to train additional districts as subsequent replicators.
- Monitoring implementation of the replication by the five selected districts.

It should be noted that the last three goals could not be achieved during the first year of a replication program. Actual replication does not begin until the second year. Therefore, monitoring and technical assistance can not take place until then. Similarly, "turnkey" training implies that a district has already begun its actual replication activities and therefore cannot begin until the second year.

PROJECT EVALUATION

The evaluation was undertaken with two primary aims. One was summative: to measure the extent to which each of the five objectives was attained. The other was formative: to examine the implementation process in order to identify any changes which would enhance the future progress of the project. This latter aim is significant since the N.D.N. has renewed its funding to City-as-School for 1986-87.

*A "turnkey" site is one with staff trained to replicate the model, who subsequently receive additional training to prepare them to train staff in additional districts to replicate the model.

The Office of Educational Assessment/High School Evaluation Unit (O.E.A./H.S.E.U.) gathered information from written logs, reports, and reaction sheets assembled or prepared by the project staff and from personal interviews with the project's two co-directors. An Assistant Principal of City-as-School, who served as a member of the project team, also attended and contributed to one of the personal interviews.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

In Chapter II the organization and implementation of the project is presented. The achievement of project objectives is assessed in Chapter III. Conclusions and recommendations are offered in Chapter IV.

II. PROJECT ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

For 1985-86, project activities consisted of three principal types of work: awareness activities, to establish wide-spread familiarity with City-as-School; selection activities, which focused on the process of entering into contractual relationships with replicators; and intensive training of staff in the replicating districts.

AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

To insure that all project personnel would be fully conversant with City-as-School, every member of the project team was a full-time administrator or teacher at the school. The team members were given released time for work on the project. Since City-as-School conducts few conventionally scheduled classes, staff members were able to travel extensively without inordinate disruption of services to the school or its students. Originally, project managers envisioned a two-member team. This team was expanded to seven members early in the academic year to reduce the disruption to students which occurred when the team consisted of only two members.

According to the co-directors, this dispersion of project responsibilities proved effective. At the same time, it made possible considerably more travel than was initially envisioned. The proposal called for 47 person-days of out-of-town travel. The actual 1985-86 total was 180 days, with the 133 additional days constituting an in-kind contribution by the school. This extensive travel often involved repeated trips to the same sites or the same areas of the country.

To promote awareness, the team prepared various print and audio-visual

materials describing City-as-School. They then sent an initial mailing to the ten largest school districts in each of ten states which had made dropout prevention a state priority. These mailings generated few responses from their intended recipients, the district superintendents. The co-directors then turned to the N.D.N. facilitators in the ten targeted states for advice and assistance in their awareness efforts. The facilitators disseminated the materials to appropriate subordinates in the large districts, as well as to smaller districts they thought would be receptive.

The replication project staff logged in responses and followed up with telephone contacts and mailings of more comprehensive informational packages. With those districts that retained interest, staff members travelled to the potential replicator district for personal presentations. During the year, staff members gave 24 such presentations, nine to districts which initiated the visits by their expressions of interest. The other 14 were at professional conferences and were initiated by project staff.

The staff also sought to create awareness through articles published in professional journals and the mass media. There was some success in placing articles in both types of publications, but those placements did not generate any inquiries.

SELECTION

The project established two criteria for selecting replicators: high interest and the availability of adequate resources.

Interest levels were inferred from each district's initiative in following up on the initial awareness materials: those which issued invitations to the project team to come for a personal presentation and

which made key staff members available were judged to be sufficiently interested.

The decision to limit awareness activities to ten states was a filter which may have excluded districts in other states that might have been highly interested in the project. In addition, the project staff found that the state N.D.N. facilitators varied widely in their degree of interest in City-as-School. This proved to be a key variable: All of the first-year replicators were located in only two states, California and Maine, and the expansion of the project for the second year incorporates a total of 14 districts in only three states, California, Maine, and Hawaii.

The determination of adequacy of resources was made by means of an "Implementation Plan" completed and signed by districts to specify the amount of money, the personnel, and the materials to be committed for the replication. A signed Implementation Plan was considered a contract to replicate. Six such agreements were signed in 1985-86: Sacramento and Ventura, California, and Augusta, Brunswick, Gardiner and Sanford, Maine.

Since City-as-School is validated by J.D.R.P. as a model for all districts with secondary schools, the selection criteria did not include as qualifying factors such considerations as district size, pupil performance, dropout rates, socioeconomics or other demographics.

TRAINING

Project staff held three-day training sessions for four of the districts which signed implementation agreements. After signing agreements, two of the districts, Augusta and Sanford, found that resources were unavailable in 1985-86 but could be provided the following year. The

co-directors said that those two districts would receive services in 1986-87 along with eight other first-year replicators.

III. OUTCOMES

SELECTING ELIGIBLE DISTRICTS

Using criteria in the proposal, the project selected and entered into replication agreements with six eligible districts. Only four of these districts subsequently received services. However, according to N.D.N. definitions, a statement of "intent to adopt" satisfies the requirement of "selection." City-as-School categorizes a signed Implementation Plan as proof of intent to adopt. Therefore, the objective was achieved. In addition, at the end of the first year, eight additional districts signed implementation plans for 1986-87.

PROVIDING IN-SERVICE TRAINING

The proposal specified that districts signing implementation plans would each receive three days of on-site orientation by project staff. Such training was given during 1985-86 to four replicators and was scheduled to be given in 1986-87 to ten more. The training incorporated a structured curriculum and materials developed by the project staff to insure uniformity despite the use of different trainers.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, TURN-KEY TRAINING, AND MONITORING

Activities leading toward these objectives were not conducted in 1985-86, hence the objectives were not attained. Such activities have been rescheduled for the coming year. The co-directors said the proposal had proven unrealistic in its expectations of timing. Awareness activities, contracting, and scheduling of initial in-service training consumed most of the year. This time frame did not allow for technical assistance or turn-key training, which must follow the earlier activities. Monitoring was

also inappropriate, since that objective implies that replications are in place and available for inspection. It was not possible for any of the replicators to have an operational program during the first year.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project made significant progress during its first year. Extensive awareness activities were conducted, leading to 14 signed implementation plans. Initial training was completed for four districts and scheduled for 1986-87 for the remaining districts.

The project attained those of its objectives that were appropriate to the first year of operation. The inability of the project to fully attain its first-year objectives is primarily a result of some of those objectives being inappropriate for the first year of operation rather than of a functional failure by the project.

First-year activities entailed considerably more staff effort and travel time than originally contemplated. Since additional federal funding was not available, this added effort represented an increased in-kind contribution by City-as-School.

Several recommendations are offered for future project operations:

- Care should be taken in drafting objectives to insure that expected outcomes are realistic and appropriately sequenced.
- If implementation plans truly are contractual documents, they should be binding rather than loose statements of intent. They should be signed by a superintendent, Board president, or other officer of the district empowered to bind the district. Funds should also be encumbered when the contract is signed.
- The geographical clustering of replicator districts weakens the N.D.N.'s "lighthouse" or "turnkey" concept, since geographically proximate districts can train one another. Therefore, the project should seek broader geographic balance in its selection of replicators. If such an effort is frustrated by unresponsive state facilitators, then other linkages may need to be developed.
- Whenever possible, efforts should be made to consolidate trips in order to reduce the amount and expense of travel. Mail, telephone consultation and teleconferencing are recommended whenever their use would not degrade the quality of project services.